

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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REP. TRENT VAN HAAFTEN'S STATEHOUSE REPORT

INDIANAPOLIS – As this Report goes to press, we will be in the middle of our last week of the session. The law requires that we adjourn (or “sine die”) on Friday (April 29). If we do not have all of our business done, the Governor may call us back into a special session. This promises to be a week unlike any other we have had this session.

Last week, I wrote about the makeup of conference committees. A meeting of a conference committee can take place with only a couple of hours notice. Subjects thought to be dead and buried for this year can rise back to life with stunning speed. More than 100 bills have been sent to conference committees. An idea that is stripped from one bill can very easily find a home in a different conference committee. As you can imagine, legislators have to be on their toes to keep track of this action.

While there are many people who will be wanting to see what happens on such things as a new stadium for the Indianapolis Colts or education reforms, I think it is safe to say that most of the attention in these last few days will focus on two issues: the biennial state budget and daylight-saving time.

I continue to have the same concerns with the proposed budget: education funding cuts and property tax increases. Without significant changes, there will be little support for the budget from House Democrats.

The budget plans endorsed by the House and Senate Republicans still cut funding to Posey County and Vanderburgh County schools. Unfortunately, Mt. Vernon and North Posey schools have already provided notices of lost jobs to teachers based upon the proposed funding cuts. As I have stated many times before, I cannot and will not vote for a budget that does harm to our duty to provide a quality, free public education.

Both budget proposals also place a cap on the Property Tax Replacement Credits that were used by the state to reduce the property tax bills for homeowners. It is very easy to see that these added costs will be passed along to local residents in the form of property tax increases, with some estimates of these increases running as high as \$640 million. This is a reversal from recent sessions, when lawmakers on both sides of the aisle worked to reduce local property taxes.

Plans to bring daylight-saving time to most of Indiana also remain up in the air as I write this. Gov. Daniels is insisting that we pass legislation making the time change, but he has not offered a clear answer to those people who believe Indiana should be in the Central Time Zone rather than on Eastern Time.

I am quickly learning that a person should not be surprised by anything that happens here at the Statehouse. Personally, the time and energy that has been devoted to daylight-saving time simply amazes me. No pun intended, but only time will tell how the time issue is resolved.

The Meth Bill was also discussed in conference committee on Thursday. I was pleased with how the committee chair handled the meeting. Many House members had been worried that meaningful measures aimed to combat this serious problem would be ignored by the chair. After our meeting, I am optimistic some of our ideas will be embraced.

It is my sincere desire that next week's Report will tell you how our session came to an end. The key to the entire week is the budget, so the week is sure to provide some interesting events. We must make sure that our efforts provide growth for all of Indiana. As always, it is my privilege to serve you here at the Statehouse.

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